

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT DREW MIDDLETON PAGE TWO BYLINER
NEW YORK TIMES THURSDAY DECEMBER 30 HEADED "BRITAIN
PREPARES TO USE WARSHIPS TO PROTECT OIL FIELDS IN NORTH
SEA."
2. EARLY IN 1977, BRITAIN'S ROYAL NAVY WILL DEPLOY FIVE
SMALL WARSHIPS AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD MILITARY PROTEC-
TION OF THE NORTH SEA OIL AND GAS FIELDS.
3. BY EARLY IN THE 1980'S THESE FIELDS WILL INCLUDE 80
TO 100 PLATFORMS AND 6,000 MILES OF PIPELINE AND WILL BE
PRODUCING ONE-THIRD OF THE OIL REQUIREMENTS OF THE
EUROPEAN MEMBERS OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION.
4. ADM. ISSAC C. KIDD, SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER ATLANTIC,
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AND HIS STAFF ARE PLANNING FOR THE MORE POWERFUL DEFENSE
OF THE FIELDS IN WAR. THE OTHER NATO MEMBER DIRECTLY
INVOLVED BESIDES BRITAIN IS NORWAY, BUT WEST GERMANY, THE
NETHERLANDS, DENMARK, BELGIUM AND FRANCE, ALL OF WHICH
WILL BE IN THE MARKET FOR NORWEGIAN OR BRITISH NORTH SEA
OIL, ARE ALSO INTERESTED IN THE DEFENSE OF THE FIELDS.

5. A BRITISH GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT SAID THAT THE NAVY WOULD PUT INTO SERVICE "FIVE LIGHTLY ARMED OFFSHORE PATROL VESSELS CAPABLE OF REMAINING AT SEA FOR LONG PERIODS AND FITTED WITH RAPID MEANS OF COMMUNICATION" WITH NAVAL AND POLICE INSTALLATIONS ASHORE.

6. THE BRITISH AND OTHER INTERESTED GOVERNMENTS ARE CONCERNED WITH THE POSSIBILITY THAT SUCH GROUPS AS THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION AND THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY MIGHT SABOTAGE THE OIL FIELDS. ALL RECOGNIZE THE DANGER TO THE OIL FIELDS IN THE EVENT OF EAST-WEST HOSTILITIES.

7. A SENIOR OFFICER SPECULATED THAT THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION MIGHT LAUNCH ATTACKS BY FROGMEN AGAINST THE PIPELINES. THE P.L.O. AND ITS BACKERS IN THE ARAB WORLD, HE REASONED, WOULD RECOGNIZE THAT ONCE THE OIL FIELDS WERE IN FULL PRODUCTION EUROPE'S RELIANCE ON MIDDLE EAST OIL WOULD BE REDUCED AND SO WOULD THE ARABS' ABILITY TO USE OIL AS AN ECONOMIC WEAPON, AS THEY DID IN THE 1973 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR.

8. THE DEFENSE OF THE FIELDS IN WAR IS COMPLICATED BECAUSE OF THEIR EXTENT AND THEIR PROXIMITY TO THE MAIN BASES OF SOVIET SEA AND AIR POWER IN NORTHERN EUROPE. RUSSIAN FORCES AT THESE BASES HAVE RECENTLY BEEN STRENGTHENED BY THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE NEW SOVIET BOMBER AND BY THE STEADY GROWTH OF THE NORTHERN FLEET BASED ON MURMANSK.

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9. THE OIL FIELDS ARE IN THREE DISTINCT AREAS.

10. IN THE SOUTH, 53 TO 54 DEGREES NORTH, ARE FIELDS IN THE BRITISH SECTOR. THE WATER IN THE AREA IS SHALLOW AND ALMOST ALL THE DISCOVERIES WERE OF GAS. ALL THE BRITISH GAS IS LANDED BY PIPELINE ON THE EAST COAST OF ENGLAND. THERE IS ONE LARGE GAS FIELD CALLED PLACID IN THE DUTCH SECTOR.

11. THE MAJORITY OF THE OIL DISCOVERIES WERE IN THE MIDDLE NORTH SEA, 55 TO 58 DEGREES NORTH. AGAIN MOST OF THE FIELDS ARE IN THE BRITISH SECTOR BUT THERE IS ONE LARGE NORWEGIAN FIELD CENTERED ON EKOFISK. THE FIVE MAJOR BRITISH FIELDS ARE IN WATER 250 TO 420 FEET DEEP.

12. ABOVE 58 DEGREES NORTH LIE A GAS FIELD AND AN OIL FIELD IN THE NORWEGIAN SECTOR AND SEVEN BRITISH FIELDS.

WEATHER HAS MADE THE EXPLOITATION OF THESE FIELDS MORE

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DIFFICULT THAN WAS THE CASE FURTHER SOUTH. WAVE HEIGHTS
IN WINTER AVERAGE SEVEN FEET FOR HALF OF THE TIME AND
EXCEED 15 FEET FOR 20 PERCENT OF THE TIME. WAVES IN
STORMS MAY BE UP TO 100 FEET AND WINDS GUST UP TO 100
MILES AN HOUR. WATER DEPTH IS 400 TO 500 FEET.

13. QUALIFIED SOURCES EMPHASIZED THAT BOMBERS OPERATING
OUT OF THE AIRFIELD COMPLEX AROUND MURMANSK AND FLYING
NORTH AND WEST OF NORWAY WOULD BE OUTSIDE THE SURVEILLANCE
OF THE RADAR CHAIN OPERATED BY NATO TO COVER THE BALTIC
SEA AND THE CENTRAL SECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN FRONT. (END
TEXT.)
ROBINSON

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